

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-08 ACDA-07 IO-13 TRSE-00 /084 W
-----051212Z 065698 /14

R 042045Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9856
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2494

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT AR
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VIDELA'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2336

1. SUMMARY. VIDELA'S ANNIVERSARY SPEECH TO NATION CONTAINED NO SURPRISES. HE JUSTIFIED THE MILITARY COUP, SUMMED UP PROGRESS OF FIRST YEAR OF EFFORTS TO BRING ORDER AND STABILITY TO COUNTRY, AND INAUGURATED A "PERIOD OF CREATION" DURING WHICH ARGENTINES WILL REFORM THEMSELVES, CONDUCT DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FUTURE, AND PREPARE A PROPOSAL FOR NATIONAL UNITY. ONLY WHEN THESE STEPS ARE ACCOMPLISHED WILL NATION BE READY FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW ORDER AND RELINQUISHMENT OF POWER BY MILITARY. SUBSTANCE AND TONE OF DELIVERY OF SPEECH WERE SOBER AND PHILOSOPHIC, COMMITTING GOA TO NOTHING CONCRETE AND SETTING NO REAL SCHEDULE FOR MOVEMENT. MODERATION APPEARS TO BE THE POLICY, HOWEVER, AND OPTIONS FOR GOA AND ARGENTINA REMAIN REASONABLY OPEN. END SUMMARY.

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2. GENERAL VIDELA ADDRESSED NATION ON RADIO AND TV FOR 30 MINUTES ON EVENING OF MARCH 31, REPORTING ON HIS FIRST YEAR AS PRESIDENT AND SUGGESTING COURSE MILITARY PLAN TO FOLLOW IN SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM FUTURE. VIDELA'S IMAGE AS AUSTERE, REASONABLE MAN, WITHOUT THE HARSHNESS OR STRIDENCY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING TONE OF A PINOCHET, LEFT LISTENERS WITH IMPRESSION OF FIRMNESS BUT NOTHING OF THE STEREOTYPICAL LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY CAUDILLO.

3. HE BEGAN BY JUSTIFYING HIS JUNTA'S COUP OF MARCH 1976, REVIEW-
ING THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHAOS OF THE PERIOD, AND EMPHASIZING
THAT MILITARY HAD BEEN FORCED TO FILL POWER VACUUM LEFT BY
FAILURE OF CONSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS TO RESOLVE CRISES. FIRST
AND MOST IMPORTANT TASK WAS BATTLE AGAINST SUBVERSION, BUT MILITARY
VICTORY OVER SUBVERSION WAS NOT ONLY GOAL OF MILITARY. VIDELA
SAID "PERMANENT GOAL.. IS THAT OF ESTABLISHING A TRUE, DURABLE
POLITICAL ORDER BASED ON THE VALUES OF FREEDOM, EQUALITY, JUSTICE
AND SECURITY". WHILE SUBVERSIVE ACTION HAS BEEN MARKEDLY REDUCED,
IT IS STILL CAPABLE OF RANDOM ACTS, AND GOA WILL CONTINUE ANTI-
SUBVERSIVE EFFORT" ...IRRESPECTIVE OF THE FORM IT MAY ADOPT."

4. MOVING TO SECOND PRIORITY EFFORT OF LAST YEAR, VIDELA REVIEWED
ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES OF COUP PERIOD AND SUBSEQUENT PARTIAL
RECOVERY. HE CITED AS BASIC THE SUCCESS IN "...PREVENTING UNEM-
PLOYMENT AND LOSS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE." HE RECOGNIZED
"STOCICISM" OF POOR DURING LAST YEAR, AND ATTITUDE OF THOSE WHO
PRODUCED, INVESTED AND PAID TAXES. IN ONLY APPROACH TO HARSHNESS
IN SPEECH, HOWEVER, HE CASTIGATED LACK OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
OF SOME WHO "...DESPITE THEIR POWER OF DECISION OVER GOODS AND
RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE NATION, ...ARE THE ONES WHO ARE NOT
SUPPORTING THE COUNTRY AND ENCOURAGING THE POSSIBILITY OF GREAT
PROFITS AND HOPE THAT INFLATION WILL NEVER END." TOUGHEST LINE
IN SPEECH WAS: "THE ARMED FORCES WILL NOT TOLERATE THOSE WHO
BY ENJOYING THEIR OWN LIFE, DO NOT HONOR THE SACRIFICE OF OUR
HEROES."

5. VIDELA DREW SOLOMONIC LINE BY SETTING AS ECONOMIC GOAL" ...
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A PERMANENT COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE ADVANTAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND
THE QUITABLE PERSONAL AND REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE BENEFITS
OF THIS DEVELOPMENT." STRONG AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION MUST BALANCE
INDUSTRIAL GROWTH, WITH PRIVATE SECTOR HAVING RESPONSIBILITY
FOR AREAS NOT VITAL TO NATIONAL SECURITY.

6. "CLEAR-CUT GOALS" OF MILITARY ARE "REORGNAIZATION OF ECONOMY,
IMPROVED FUNCTIONING OF STATE, NEW DEVELOPMENT STYLE, RECOVERY
OF MORALITY AND CONFIDENC." THREE STATES IN JOURNEY ARE PERIOD
OF REORGANIZATION NOW SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE, PERIOD OF CREATION
OF IDEAS AND CONSENSUS ON HOW POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURES
NOW BEGINNING, AND FINAL PERIOD OF NATIONAL UNITY WITH IMPLICATION
OF RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT. KEY TO SECOND PERIOD IS
STATEMENT: "FORMULATION OF PROPOSAL TO COUNTRY IS FUNDAMENTAL TASK
WHICH ARMED FORCES WILL HAVE TO UNDERTAKE IN PERIOD OF CREATION."
THIS "...MAY LEAD TO A CIVILIAN-MILITARY AGREEMENT." THIS PROPOSAL,
HOWEVER, DOES NOT "...IMPLY THE EXISTENCE OF AN ELECTORAL
SCHEDULE." IT WILL INCLUDE INITIATION OF A DIALOGUE TO ALLOW
WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS--"WE ARE WILLING

TO LISTEN, AND LISTENING PRESUPPOSES DIALOGUE."

7. TO COMPLETE PERIOD OF CREATION, MILITARY WILL HAVE TO ACCOMPLISH: FIRST, COMPLETE ERADICATION OF SUBVERSION; SECOND, RESTRUCTURING OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITY; THIRD, MODERNIZATION BOTH IN IDEAS AND MEN, PAVING ROAD FOR NEW LEADERS; FOURTH, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGAL INSTRUMENTS TO REVITALIZE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF NATION; FIFTH, MODIFICATION OF POLITICAL PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES FOR SELECTION OF LEADERS. ONLY ON COMPLETION OF THESE STEPS WILL INSTITUTION OF DEMOCRATIC REGIME REFLECTING JOINT DESIRES OF ARMED FORCES AND REPRESENTATIVE CIVILIAN SECTORS BE POSSIBLE.

8. VIDELA ENDED BY ADMITTING POSSIBILITY OF UNINTENTIONAL MISTAKES AND EFFORTS IN WORK CARRIED ON SO FAR (GENERALLY INTERPRETED AS REFERENCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS), AND GIVING ASSURANCES THAT MILITARY NOT MOTIVATED BY LUST FOR POWER OR DESIRE TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

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IN POWER FOREVER.THEY WILL STAY, HOWEVER, UNTIL THEIR GOALS ARE RECOGNIZED AND GUARANTEED.

9. COMMENT. PRESS RESPONSE HAS BEEN FAVORABLE, WITH SOME CAUTIOUS COMMENT, BUT AT THIS WRITING THERE HAVE BEEN FEW MEANINGFUL EDITORIALS OR OTHER RESPONSE FROM POLITICIANS OR PUBLIC. SPEECH WAS NOT ANTICIPATED WITH BATED BREATH, AND NOT HEARD WITH ALARM OR EVEN GREAT INTEREST, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN MORE OR LESS WHAT VIDELA INTENDED. COMMENT WHICH WE OFFERED IN REFTEL ON ANNIVERSARY STATEMENT OF JUNTA APPLIES EQUALLY TO VIDELA SPEECH. MILITARY HAVE LEFT THEMSELVES UNCOMMITTED TO ANY PRECISE TIMETABLE OR TO ANY CLEARLY DEFINED IDEOLOGICAL PATH. WITHIN GUIDELINES LAID DOWN BY VIDELA THERE IS MARGIN FOR ALMOST ANYTHING, AND GOALS ARE SO BROADLY DEFINED THAT THEY CAN BE DECLARED ACCOMPLISHED IN ANY TIME PERIOD RANGING FROM A YEAR OR TWO TO SEVERAL GENERATIONS; "RESTRUCTURING RELATIONSHIPS" BETWEEN ARGENTINES WILL BE AN OPEN-ENDED TASK AT BEST. ON BALANCE, ONLY CLEAR CONCLUSION TO BE DRAWN IS THAT VIDELA AND THE MODERATES REMAIN IN CONTROL, COMMITTED TO RE-ESTABLISHING IN ARGENTINE SOMETHING RESEMBLING THE SINCERE IF SHAKY EFFORTS AT ACHIEVEMENT OF DEMOCRACY OF THE PAST, AND UNWILLING TO CONTEMPLATE TAKING ARGENTINA OFF TO THE EXTREMES OF EITHER THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHT OR LEFT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, ANNIVERSARY MESSAGES, NATIONAL UNIFICATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BUENOS02494
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770118-0112
Format: TEL
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770492/aaaadclh.tel
Line Count: 162
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 304301ab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BUENOS AIRES 2336
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2911787
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT VIDELA'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AR, (VIDELA, JORGE RAFAEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/304301ab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009